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- DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON.

Rediscovery of *Polypodium virginianum* forma *brachypteron* (Ridlon) Fernald

LEOPOLD A. CHARETTE

In 1921 H. C. Ridlon, of Bennington, Vermont, described *Polypodium vulgare* L. f. *rotundatum*, a peculiar, probably abnormal form, in which the segments of the blade are reduced to semicircular or deltoid lobes, toothed at the apex. It was soon found that the name f. *rotundatum* had already been used, so it was changed to f. *brachypteron* (Weatherby, 1921). Ridlon did not give the origin of the specimen upon which the form was based, except to say that it came from Vermont. He neglected to record if a type specimen had been preserved.

This has been a very rare form and nothing quite approaching it seemed to have been collected since its description until two

fern enthusiasts collected it in Colchester, Vermont, on November 1, 1961, and on May 30, 1962. Their specimens came from a colony of 16 plants.

Dole (1937) gave the only definite data as to the type station. He wrote, "Rocks, Jamaica—type sta. 1919 (Ridlon)." It is surmised that Dole's information was based on his personal knowledge, of which he left no further written record. Other workers on our ferns, such as Weatherby (1921) and Fernald (1922) made no mention of the type station or of the type specimen.

In an endeavor to procure more data, and hoping to locate the type specimen, I wrote to various individuals and institutions. The replies produced no clue to a type. One correspondent, Mr. G. L. Kirk, advised that Mrs. Polly Ridlon Wilson was one of Ridlon's daughters and that she might have some information.

A letter to her inquired about the final disposition of the Ridlon herbarium and requested any information she might have pertaining to her father's collection of forma *brachypterum*. Mrs. Wilson replied as follows:

"Unfortunately, I could not locate any correspondence nor even any notes regarding his study of this form of the Polypody. I do not know whether the station is still in existence, and I never had any knowledge of its exact location. However, tucked inside an old edition of *The Flora of Vermont* I came across two prints of the enclosed photograph. On the back of the duplicate he had printed: "Polypodium vulgare variety brachypterum (Ridlon)—Bloodsucker Pond, Jamaica, Vt."

"My father's herbarium is now at Bennington College, and we might hope that the type specimen of this fern is there. . . ."

Bloodsucker Pond is a local name for Adam Pond, which can be found on the Londonderry, Vt., Quadrangle of the U. S. Topographic Survey map. Mr. Ridlon's daughter was unable to consult her father's herbarium until March 9, 1963. Concerning her search for the type specimen Mrs. Wilson wrote:

"At last I have been in touch with Mr. Woodworth at Bennington College, and regret to report that there is no good news. I spent last Saturday carefully checking my father's herbarium there and am satisfied that there is no specimen *at all* of the form of Polypody which we are seeking.

"I am sorry to have to thus dash your hopes of finding it in Bennington. I had hoped and really expected to find at least something in connection with this. It seems as though it must have been preserved somewhere, but it is strange that you cannot locate it in any of the major herbariums where it might logically have been deposited."

The only documentary evidence of the type specimen seems to be the photograph mentioned above. This photograph has been reproduced and together with data pertinent thereto mounted on sheets for deposit in the herbaria at VT, US, GH, NEBC, Bennington College, and the herbarium of the American Fern Society. The discoverers of this form in Colchester, Vt., have offered to make available a few sheets from the new station for deposit in the aforementioned herbaria.

It should be mentioned that the distribution of this form, as given by Fernald (1950) was incorrect when published. He wrote, "—, very rare in w. Vt.; —." It should have read, "—, very rare in s. Vt.; —."

The known occurrence of the forma is as follows: WINDHAM COUNTY: "Rocks, Jamaica—type sta. 1919 (Ridlon)." CHITTENDEN COUNTY: on rocks in Colchester Township, 16 plants observed growing with the typical form, *Mrs. Laurence P. Howe* and *Mrs. Oliver R. Eastman*, Nov. 1, 1961 (immature fronds), May 30, 1962, mature fronds).

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PRINGLE HERBARIUM, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, BURLINGTON, VERMONT.